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FREDERIC WARD PUTNAM.

BY CHARLES PEABODY.

It has been thought fitting that the Boston Branch of the American Folk-Lore Society should provide for the Journal an account of the life and work of Professor Frederick Ward Putnam, together with a portrait.

Professor Putnam was elected President of the Boston Association of the American Folk-Lore Society on April 18, 1890, at a meeting held in the rooms of the Boston Society of Natural History, Dana Estes presiding,¹ and he remained the chief executive of the Boston members until his death. It is with this association in mind that the author has compiled the dates and occurrences, and has added those appreciations drawn from personal companionship that seem most likely to interest his fellow-students in folk-lore.

Frederick Ward Putnam was born in Salem, Mass., April 6, 1839, and died in Cambridge, Aug. 14, 1915. He was the son of Ebenezer and Elizabeth (Appleton) Putnam. The families of both his father and mother were English, and their representatives settled in Massachusetts about the same time, that is, 1640.

Eastern Massachusetts, and especially Essex County, is a rich field for research in genealogy and in pure English tradition. The student of the latter on the folk-lore side will find in family names, place-names, architecture, sentiment, religion, and dialect, much to recall the England of the seventeenth century and to suggest the eastern and southern counties of the present time.

Professor Putnam liked nothing better than to recount anecdotes of himself and his friends in Essex County, especially to one of similar relationship and origin.

A dry catalogue of all his honors and positions is not necessary: never did man, from Horace's time to our own, erect better the *monumentum aere perennius*. Yet he himself was keenly alive to the value of degrees and distinctions: they were the reward of valor and an earnest of future work. Woe betide a student who should fail to appreciate the value of an A.B.! and he never forgot to address a new Ph.D. as "Doctor" on his emergence from a successful examination.

Harvard, class of '62, claims him as S.B.; Williams, *honoris causa*, as A.M. (1868); and the University of Pennsylvania, for the same reason, as S.D. (1894). Thus he, with his father, grandfather, and

¹ This Journal, vol. iii (1890), pp. 165 *et seq.*

great-grandfather, was a Harvard graduate. Perhaps it should not be so, but continuous tradition means much. Without it—the background of the individual or grouped phenomena which form the subject-matter of our science—folk-lore would not exist. With him it culminated in a great loyalty and devotion to Harvard.

His university activity is thus set forth: Assistant to Louis Agassiz, Harvard University, 1857-64; Assistant in Ichthyology, Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, 1876-78; Curator of the Peabody Museum of American Archæology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1875-1909; Honorary Curator of the Peabody Museum, 1909-13; Honorary Director of the Peabody Museum, 1913-15; Peabody Professor of American Archæology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1886-1909; Professor Emeritus, Harvard University, 1909-15; Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Anthropological Museum, University of California, 1903-09; Professor Emeritus, University of California, 1909-15.

To the above should be added his major appointments to museum positions: Curator of Ichthyology, Boston Society of Natural History, 1859-68; Curator of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1894-1903. He was Chief of the Department of Ethnology at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893-94.

Besides this, he was interested in the Essex Institute and in the East Indian Marine Society of Salem; and he was Permanent Secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science from 1873 to 1898, as well as its President in 1898,—a record of which he could be particularly proud.

For his archæological researches he received the Drexel gold medal in 1903, and was decorated with the Cross of the *Légion d'Honneur* in 1896.

More than thirty learned societies counted him a member. Of these, perhaps the Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard Chapter, holds the ranking position. Among the foreign societies are represented Canada, Peru, Argentina, England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and Italy.

In the Bibliography¹ compiled by Miss Frances H. Mead are more than four hundred titles, besides those of many editorial publications.

In 1864 Professor Putnam married Miss Adelaide Martha Edmonds of Cambridge, who died in 1879. He was married again in 1882, this time to Miss Esther Orne Clarke of Chicago, who survives him. Two daughters and a son are living.

Professor Putnam was the dean of American anthropologists. He lived to see his pupils and younger contemporaries carry and spread his influence and training all over the land. San Francisco, Chicago,

¹ Putnam Anniversary Volume, *ad fin.*

Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and, above all, Cambridge, are beholden to him. However they, the younger generation, may differ among themselves, all of them (and the author counts himself one) delight in calling themselves his "boys" and in referring lovingly to "the Professor," as if there were really only one.

He liked immensely to inaugurate things; he could become quite tart over a dusty erudition that would learn stones from sermons and running brooks from books; he started movements, societies, methods, plans, — anything to help anthropology, anything to help our knowledge of man and his works. He was a great believer in associations and congresses, and many the unwilling foot sent hurrying to Christmas Convocation Week by the insistence of the quiet man in Cambridge.

In Miss Mead's Bibliography we find this record for 1879 (No. 183): "Circular letter proposing to establish a society for the purpose of furthering and directing archaeological investigation and research, by Charles W. Eliot, Alexander Agassiz, W. Endicott, Jr., W. W. Goodwin, Augustus Lowell, F. W. Putnam, Martin Brimmer, T. G. Appleton, E. W. Gurney, Henry P. Kidder, C. C. Perkins, C. E. Norton. This is the Archæological Institute of America." This is interesting from the great weight and authority of the names famous in classical archaeology, and from the fact that from the beginning the Archæological Institute of America has recognized American archaeology. Up to that time such recognition of the subject as an independent science and as a handmaid to the history of art had been slow in coming. The classical archaeologists, enamored of the Aphrodite of Melos, would have little of Quetzalcoatl, — delighted with *Corpora Inscriptionum* and with *Corpuscula Marmorea*, they cared not at all for pictographs and rock-scratchings, nor for little chips that can be found in every back-yard, — yet at this time George Peabody, Frederick W. Putnam, Jeffries Wyman, had the foresight and the ability to see and settle the importance of this side of anthropology.

With all his loyalty to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and to Section H, of which he was very proud, he yet was present at the gathering-together of the inner circle that became the American Anthropological Association.¹ He was one of the forty "invitees" who formed the Association in the Oakland Church in Pittsburgh, June 30, 1902. In 1905 he was its President at the California meeting.

On Dec. 12, 1889, the members of the American Folk-Lore Society, which had been organized but a short time, met at the house of Miss A. L. Alger, and the ancestor of the Boston Branch came into existence. Four months later Professor Putnam became the head, and until his

¹ *American Anthropologist*, 1903, pp. 185 *et seq.*

death there was thought of no other. The following are those charter members of the Society living in and around Boston who in 1914 were still on the rolls: George L. Kittredge, Clarence J. Blake, Charles P. Bowditch, Albert Matthews, Crawford Howell Toy.

While speaking of his love for the new and untried, it is pleasant to recall that in 1903, at the opening of the Department of Archaeology of Phillips Academy, Andover, he delivered the address of honor. Teaching prehistoric archaeology in a boys' school, and building up a museum almost under the nose of Harvard University, might cause a prudent curator to hesitate. Not at all. He gave the young institution all his best wishes and advice, and, as a member of its first Advisory Committee, kept its younger directors in the right way.

In research, the results of the excavation of the Ohio mounds during the eighties, and in particular the Turner group, remain to his lasting honor and credit. Whence came the Americans, who were the Mound-Builders, when was the advent of man on this continent? — these were the obsessing questions; and if they are not yet solved, it is not because he did not put his whole heart into their solution. The work in the middle West, undertaken with the co-operation of Dr. C. L. Metz, Marshall H. Saville, and others, shed for him new light on the vexed ethnology of that region, and led him to the conclusion that the "race and culture of the Southwest extended to the Ohio Valley, but was subsequently overwhelmed by the invasion of a distinct race proceeding eastward."¹ He deliberately opposed any theory excluding the possibility of more than one aboriginal race in America. The best evidence of man in America contemporary with the glacial epoch is presented by the human femur found in the Trenton gravel by Ernest Volk in 1899, and by the quartz chips from the glacial gravels of the vicinity. It is purely Professor Putnam's dogged determination in the face of disappointment and ridicule that has made possible the Trenton work for nearly thirty years.

His desire to answer the last of the three questions prompted his interest in the excavations of the Potter Creek Cave in California, and led to his taking testimony from both sides of the Atlantic on the question of the human origin of the perforations in the bone fragments found there. It is highly likely that at Trenton or in some unexplored cave the answer will yet be found.

In pure folk-lore he directed his attention principally to the American mythological field, especially to the theory of conventionalization in art, and he was the first to bring out the idea of progression by degeneration.²

Again, perhaps first, he instituted the "wedding-cake" method of

¹ This Journal, vol. viii (1895), pp. 263-264.

² C. W. Mead, Putnam Anniversary Volume, p. 129.

excavating mounds and sites, whereby slice by slice the whole mass is cut through, examined, and replaced. No one liked to return with a record of mere "trenching," and report to the Professor. Thoroughness and direct attempt in work, and an utter disregard for all but the truth, were the sure but only means to his scientific favor.

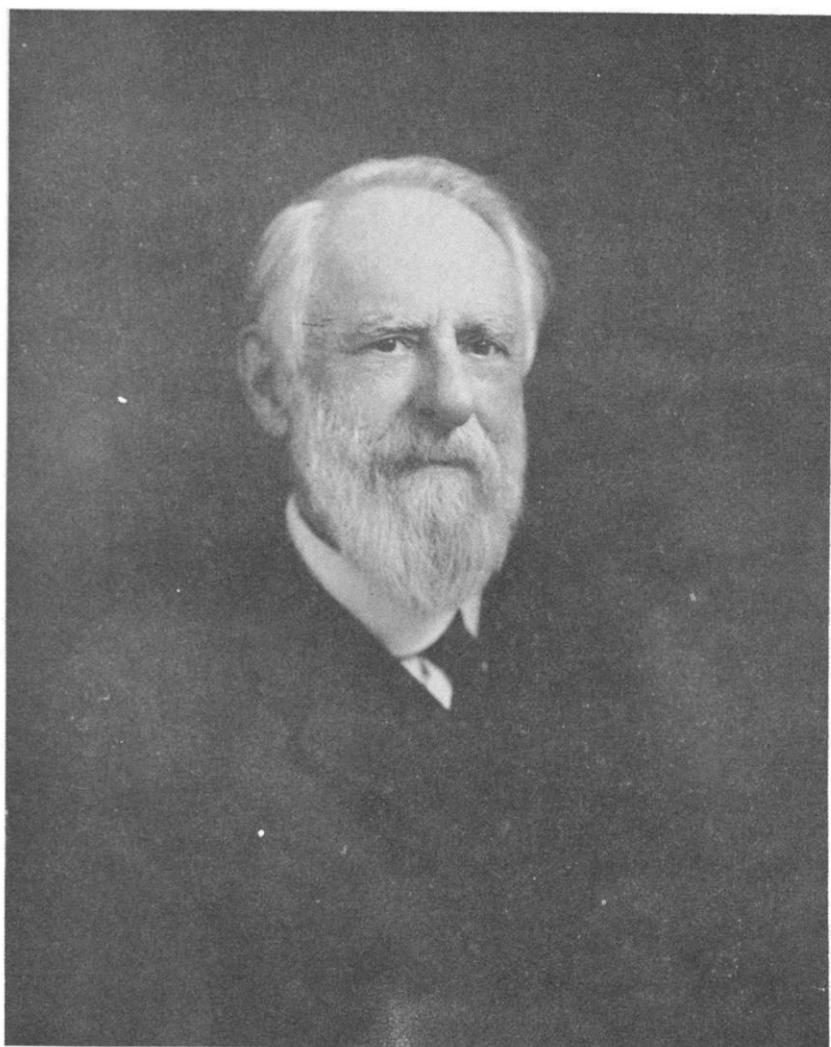
But of him as a personality how shall one speak? How may we recall his tact, his advice "always to have smooth water to swim in," his counsel to those in difficulties, his assistance to the legion who needed help? Who, like him, had the breadth of vision and the encyclopædic knowledge necessary to add a constructive something to every paper presented at a congress?

He noted the colors and the flight of gulls in San Francisco Bay; he was wise in the last theories of Schiaparelli's Canals; he was well advised as to the dangers of exploration in the Fly River country, and not ignorant of the string figures of the Navaho.

The eolithic problem made him send the author hastening over Europe to collect for the Museum those problematical flints; he regularly attended a lecture on the history of the flute in Music 6, at Harvard; an hour could be profitably employed in selecting the right word from a list of synonymes; and a visit to the Art Museum showed his appreciation of ancient Egypt.

But best of all was it of a Sunday afternoon, late, to "stop by" and find him with his family and friends before the fire. He would always welcome with the words, "How are you, my dear fellow? What's the good word?" That was the "good word" he was always so eager and able to give.

PEABODY MUSEUM OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



*By Courtesy of the Marshall Studio,
Cambridge, Mass.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. M. Watson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" and "M" at the beginning.